

# EXTENDED SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

This work aims at knowing and examining thoroughly the psychological development features in adulthood. In order to achieve this, the studies and evolutionary path suggested by Erikson (2000), Havighurst (1972) and Baltes (1999) are taken as a theoretical reference. The procedure which has been used is a semistructured interview about these two women lives to obtain relevant information related to their life experiences. Thus, taking into account their age, they will be focused on the so-called 'turning point' or phase 8: 'Integrity vs Dispair' by Erickson.

The specific target will be a quantitative and qualitative analysis of all the collected information during interviews. With this piece of information, both subjects will be compared and we will notice their differences. If the person in question feels satisfied with the life resolutions which have been taken throughout her life, she would feel that it was worth living. Consequently, a life meaning would be found (Integrity). However, if she feels the opposite way and she feels that her decisions have not been righteous whilst remaining aware of the impossibility of going backwards in time, this person would be feeling sorrow and disillusionment due to the phase in which she is going trough (Despair).

The aimed hypothesis at the current paper is to be able to obtain such information that is useful so that we can identify the main aspects of the vital development in the evolutionary stage in which these women are present. Moreover, this would allow us to locate them in the concrete pole point of the suggested dimension by Erickson: from self-integrity to despair.

## METHOD

Participants: two women both aged 78, chosen deliberately and both born in small towns from Castellon province.

Instrument: semistructured interview adopted from 'El estudio del ciclo vital a partir de historias de vida: una propuesta practica (Villar, F. & Triado, C.).2006'.

Procedure: these interviews were conducted at their own homes. During one hour approximately, we asked them questions about their lives in a chronological order and these were registered by a recorder. After that, we transcribed them with integrity for the coming line display.

## RESULTS

After having completed the semi-structured interview with 43 questions and being recorded both women, these have been transcribed in order to be carefully analysed. The answers of the subject 1's interview have a length of 86 lines while the interview of subject 2 has 90 lines. A graphic 'lifeline' type has been created where the most meaningful moments of their lives are represented. Therefore,

we have proceeded to the quantitative analysis; we have recounted the transcript lines according to different topics and life stages. With this, it can be observed that both women focused more on the topic related to their family origins. However, coincidentally both said little about health issues. Besides, the life stage which was more emphasised by both subjects needs to be highlighted. On the one hand, in the case of subject 1 old age and childhood were the most remarked life stages. On the other hand, subject 2 put more emphasis on old age and youth as well. Finally, the evolutionary stage which was the shortest to be talked about was adulthood for both women.

With respect to the qualitative analysis we would say that basing ourselves on Baltes theoretical framework (1990), for both subjects the normative influences related to age are marriage. Normative influences related to history affected to subject 1 and these are referred to her old fears about suffering post-war consequences. Normative influences are basically death and birth. Through the transcribed examples we can see the adaptation processes clearly, which divides into the following parts: selection (with regards to the age of abandoning studies); optimisation, regarding friendship and continue taking part in diverse activities; compensation, by establishing more easy- to-reach targets to their current health state.

Dealing with Havighurst's adaptive processes (1972), we have various examples with respect to the adaptation to a physical strength and declining health since subject 1 affirms having suffered a cerebral ictus and breast cancer that she could successfully overcome. Similarly, subject 2 says she can't complain and she adds she still changes furniture from one place to another by herself. Subject 1 suffered her husband's death when she was quite young, but both still take good care of their friendship (friends from childhood) and both women affirm they love very much and take care of their grandchildren. They feel they are completing their task as grandmothers and subject 2 is also in charge of her ailing spouse. Lastly, these two women claim that they go out to walk and can live by their own without any problem.

## DISCUSSION

By means of the variables which facilitated to us the Baltes Adaptation's processes (1990), we can see who the subjects have circulated at times such as the following ones: first partner relations (normative influences related to age), fears about the historical time (normative influences linked to history) and adaptations to death, illnesses and descendants births (non-normative influences). All this by the target selection, their resources optimisation and maintaining social life, together with an absences compensation by other resources and developing some other sort of goals and enjoying absolute independence.

In the case of Havighurst Vital Tasks (1972), by the same token we could observe how the two subjects have been adapting themselves to the last stage of their lives, satisfactorily fulfilling the vital tasks which this requires. Throughout the examples from the interview, we could checked how they were able to overcome loss, their accurate adaptation to physical deterioration, coming through illnesses and adjusting to new roles such as taking care of grandchildren or assisting the afflicted spouse, which is the case of subject 2.

After these two subject lives' analysis and taking into account the above mentioned theoretical framework, we can conclude by claiming that data with respect to variables coming from Baltes (1990) and Havighurst (1972) indicate that the subjects are found in a satisfactory developing stage. As a conclusion, considering Erikson's concepts of integrity and despair, we can already define at

which point of Erikson's stage 8 (2000) are these two women found. Therefore, we will claim that both are found in the INTEGRITY pole, whose quality is wisdom. After finishing this work and analysing its results, we can affirm that the main goal of this study has been fulfilled: examining the characteristics about the psychological development at adulthood, according to Baltes (1990), Erikson (1950) and Havighurst (1972) theoretical framework, all by means of a semi-structured interview.

It is also fulfilled the stated hypothesis since after having analysed the obtained data both subjects are found in a certain pole according to Erikson's stages (2000). As for the limitations in this study I consider that only one interview is too limited to collect all the required information for the analysis. On the other side, at the time of planning the interview the information I had beforehand about the most crucial areas to be explored was insufficient. As for any proposals to improve this work, I would conduct the interview in at least two or three sessions so that I could gain more detailed information, especially taking into account the participants age. Last but not least, we could broaden this interview with regards to information gathering by framing more questions about the aspects in which the theories we are based on are focused for this study.